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RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHXX/GENEVA IO MISSIONS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0624
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0386
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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0481
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DILI 000325

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USPACOM FOR JOC AND POLAD

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [AU](#) [PO](#) [NZ](#) [TT](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE FROM AFP ON INTERNATIONAL POLICING IN DILI

REF: (A) DILI 301; (B) DILI 316

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CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth S. Wharton, Political Officer, Embassy
Dili, State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

11. (C) Summary: Emboff met yesterday with Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commander Steve Lancaster to review the current status of international policing in Dili. Lancaster reported that the international police have not yet reached full capacity, primarily due to a delay in the arrival of the Malaysian contingent, and are therefore continuing to take a low profile in joint patrols with international military forces. The AFP assesses the security situation in Dili as steadily improving and notes the arrest on Sunday of a former police commander implicated in a number of gang attacks as progress on this front. However, Lancaster expressed concerns about a possible spike in violence if the President moves to dismiss the Prime Minister, a development expected tomorrow (see septels). He reported that the AFP has now established a liaison function to review security arrangements for Dili's multiple internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Lancaster provided an overview of the AFP's investigations into recent high-profile incidents including the May 25 police massacre. Finally, he discussed AFP concerns about working with the national police (PNTL) and worries that the PNTL might be brought back into action too early. End summary.

Coordination and planning of international policing

12. (SBU) In a meeting with Emboff on June 19, AFP Commander Steve Lancaster provided an update of the current status of international policing in Dili. He reported that current international police presence in Dili remains at approximately 180 AFP and 120 Portuguese Republican National Guard (GNR). The Australian police presence will increase within the week to

approximately 200 where it will remain. The arrival of 250 Malaysian police is still expected, although it has been delayed, probably until next week. Although New Zealand had expressed interest in providing some policing support, there has been to date no explicit political commitment and Lancaster is now skeptical that a New Zealand policing contribution will come through.

13. (C) The AFP is continuing to implement the five-phase approach to establishing international policing described in Ref 1A. At present, they remain in between phases II and III, with the military still out front. Under this arrangement, international police are still operating on the city sector system whereby AFP officers are conducting joint patrols with the Australian, Malaysian, and New Zealand military forces in their respective zones, while the GNR continue to operate in their own zone with no military counterparts. Lancaster reports that this sector approach will be abolished once all the international police are in country and they move fully to phase III of the policing plan in which police will supplant military forces in taking primary responsibility for security. At that point he expects all police to operate city-wide with responsibilities broken down by function rather than geography.

14. (SBU) Lancaster reported that coordination among the different police contingents is going well. He expects the Malaysians to be smoothly integrated into the joint operation and continues to be highly complementary of the GNR's coordination with AFP despite the earlier concerns regarding Portugal's refusal to integrate the GNR into the Australian command.

Dili security assessment

15. (C) Lancaster reported the AFP's assessment that the security situation in Dili is steadily improving. However, he expressed concern that the next 7 to 14 days could produce a new spike in

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security incidents if the President goes ahead with plans to dismiss the Prime Minister, as is now expected to take place tomorrow. See Ref B. Meanwhile, resource constraints have prevented the AFP from moving forward with identification and apprehension of leaders of gang violence. Investigations into the gangs currently remain in the hands of the ADF, who have produced a list of "persons of interest" for further investigation. Although the ADF has been unable to pin down precisely the leadership of gangs involved in recent violence, they believe they have significantly disrupted their operations.

16. (C) Lancaster reported one success in pursuing the instigators of violence in Dili with the arrest last night of Abilio Mesquita, the former deputy district police commander in Liquica. Mesquita is alleged to have played a leading role in much of the violence that has plagued Dili in recent weeks. The arrest was preceded on Saturday by a search of his house in Liquica during which a half dozen long-barreled firearms were seized and three other persons arrested. Although Mesquita is currently being held only on charges of illegal firearms possession, Lancaster said he believes investigations into his recent activities will uncover further offenses and that his removal from the scene is a positive development for Dili's security.

IDP camp security liaison established

17. (U) Lancaster reported that the AFP, in coordination with ADF, recently established a liaison officer for IDP camp security issues. The liaison officer is attending all UNHCR coordination meetings and will be visiting each major IDP camp at least once each week to talk to camp residents and to assess security issues and needs.

¶18. (C) Lancaster reported that the AFP is moving forward with investigative work but is facing some challenges in doing so. The three high priority investigations on which they are focusing most of their resources include: allegations of multiple extra-judicial killings during the FDTL response to rioting on April 28; the case of the family of six killed inside their house when it was burned on May 25, and the massacre of ten unarmed Timorese police officers under UN escort on May 25.

¶19. (C) Lancaster reported that the investigation into the massacre of ten unarmed police by FDTL members on May 25 is currently stalled due to the AFP investigator's lack of the proper authorization to interview witnesses. UN witnesses were to be interviewed only once permission was received from the UN in New York. However, this permission is apparently contingent on the reception of a request from the GOET to allow the AFP to conduct the investigation. Foreign and Defense Minister Jose Ramos Horta had indicated that he would relay this request formally to the UN, but Lancaster reports that the letter has not yet been sent. Meanwhile, the interview of East Timorese witnesses is held up because it requires the authorization of the Prosecutor General's office, which Lancaster says has also not been forthcoming. He expressed his concern that the GOET may be reluctant to smooth the way for this investigation despite earlier expressions by Ramos-Horta of support of the AFP investigation. Moreover, he expressed his fear that there may be an inclination to pin responsibility on the individual shooters while avoiding an examination of culpability further up the command chain.

¶10. (SBU) The investigation into the death of a family of six found in a house that was burned down on May 25 was briefly held up when the bodies disappeared from the morgue before forensics could be conducted. However, this was discovered to be an innocent miscommunication as relatives had retrieved the bodies

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for burial and morgue officials failed to coordinate this with the forensics team. Arrangements were then made to return the bodies to Dili for forensic investigation. The forensic team concluded that all deaths were caused by smoke inhalation as no other injuries or causes of death were identified.

¶11. (SBU) The third major investigation being carried out by the AFP is into the allegations of up to 60 deaths during the FDTL response to the April 28 riots in Tasi Tolu. Lancaster reported that the AFP is not encountering any bureaucratic challenges with proceeding with this investigation. However, he says it has been difficult to track down any "credible" witnesses, so that to date the investigation "doesn't have much flesh on its bones."

¶12. (C) During a previous meeting with Emboffs Lancaster had also reported that the AFP would be investigating the claims of the "Fretilin Secret Security" force in Liquica district who claim that they were armed by former Minister of Interior Rogerio Lobato on orders from Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. However, during today's conversation Lancaster indicated a reluctance on the part of the AFP to get involved in cases that have a heavy political component and implied that the AFP would probably not be pursuing this investigation. (Note: The Prosecutor General's issuance today of a warrant for the arrest of former Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato in connection with this case will no doubt result in re-engagement of the AFP in investigating this case. Septel with further information to follow shortly. End note.)

Relations with the Ministry of Interior and PNTL

¶13. (C) Lancaster expressed his concern that new Minister of Interior Alcino Barris is trying to push the PNTL back into action too quickly. In Lancaster's view, many issues need to be

addressed before the PNTL can start to be reintegrated into policing work in Dili. Most important, he noted, is the need to address the fragmentation of the police force before its members begin working together again. In addition, the question of leadership of the PNTL remains outstanding. The AFP believes that Paulo Martins, the current National Police Commissioner, will not be a player in the future of the PNTL but cannot name anyone they consider capable of filling the commissioner position. In a separate conversation, international advisors to Minister Barris stated to Emboff that the AFP's concerns may be based on miscommunication with the Minister. According to the advisors, the Minister will not be pushing for early reintegration of PNTL into Dili policing duties, but has been frustrated with what he regards as a lack of coordination by AFP.

REES